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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/12/2017  
TAGS: PREL NATO MARR GM AF  
SUBJECT: GERMANY REQUESTS RECONSIDERATION OF IV PROGRAM FOR  
AFGHAN GOVERNOR

Classified By: Political Counselor Jeffrey Rathke for reasons: 1.4 (B)  
AND (D).

¶1. (C) Acting MFA Deputy Director General for Asian Affairs, Ambassador Michael Koch, called in pol-mil/external chief October 12 to raise concerns about Embassy Kabul plans to send an Afghan governor from the northeast province of Kunduz (Mohammad Omar) on an international visitor program to the United States this fall. Koch said the Germans were growing increasingly disenchanted with Omar based on what they view as his continued unwillingness to play an active part in finding and prosecuting those responsible for the May 19 suicide attack on a German PRT Kunduz patrol that killed three Bundeswehr soldiers. Koch said that they understood the limited role that governors were supposed to play in police and prosecutorial matters, but thought that Omar was capable of doing a lot more to assist. Although Omar regularly offers PRT Kunduz verbal assurances of support on the investigation, Koch said he has never followed up on any of the information and intelligence the Germans have given him. Koch said he was afraid that Omar's reluctance to engage indicated that the governor was beginning to "hedge his bets." Koch said the Germans had already approached Afghan National Security Advisor Rassoul about possibly having Omar replaced. While no definite decision has been reached in this regard, Koch said his removal remains under serious consideration.

¶2. (C) Koch requested, therefore, that the U.S. reconsider its plans to send Omar on an IV to the U.S. this fall. He suggested putting the idea on hold until the dust regarding the suicide attack settles. Koch was afraid that Omar would view the U.S. visit as an endorsement of his behavior and undermine German efforts to press him to be more cooperative in the murder investigation. Koch said bringing to justice those responsible for the suicide attack was one of Germany's highest priorities and key to maintaining German public support for the mission in Afghanistan. If Germany could not get results even in a high profile case like the May 19 attack, this would reinforce growing pessimism about the chances for success in Afghanistan.

¶3. (C) Comment: We defer to Embassy Kabul on whether Omar is a suitable candidate for an IV, but would welcome any steps that might be taken to demonstrate that we take the German concerns seriously. We would also emphasize the importance of avoiding a public split between the U.S. and Germany on this issue, especially during the run-up to the mid-November vote on extending the parliamentary mandate for the Bundeswehr's participation in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Opponents of the mandate renewal would be sure to seize on the news as confirmation of their views that the U.S. acts unilaterally and does not take German concerns into account. End Comment.  
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